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Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/75 of 8 December 2005, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", the General Assembly, convinced that conventional arms control needed to be pursued primarily in the regional and subregional contexts, since most threats to peace and security in the post-cold-war era arose mainly among States located in the same region or subregion, decided to give urgent consideration to the issues involved in conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels and requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the subject and to submit a report to it at its sixty-first session.

2. Pursuant to that request, a note verbale, dated 27 February 2006, was sent to Member States requesting their views on the subject. To date, replies have been received from the following States: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Lebanon, Mauritius, Mexico, Pakistan and Serbia and Montenegro. These replies are reproduced in section II below. Any further replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Member States

Bangladesh

[Original: English]
[20 June 2006]

There is no denying the fact that the abrupt spread of small arms around the globe is causing unmanageable injuries to universal peace, prosperity and harmony today.

Bangladesh produces/imports small arms in a small quantity to meet her minimum security needs and it is well covered by the Charter of the United Nations.

We agree that the effectiveness of the subject resolution largely depends on the actions taken by the military significant States. The United Nations may advise on setting up feasible and workable regional or subregional centres that would work in equal partnership status. Working groups may also be formed. Objective reporting and transparency in the handling of related affairs by Member States would be the two most critical factors for the subject resolution to succeed, as expected by the world community.

Bolivia

[Original: Spanish]
[17 April 2006]

Resolution 60/75, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 8 December 2005, reaffirms how important it is for Member States to support efforts relating to conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels.

Bolivia notes with concern that a number of Latin American countries have begun an obvious arms race, which threatens to destroy the strategic equilibrium.

It is only logical that an increase by whatever means in the war arsenal of States could, at a given time, become a threat to continental peace and security.

It is therefore important to obtain a commitment to reduce the flow of conventional arms, a task which must be undertaken by the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs.

It is also important to develop and further strengthen the Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in the Americas, which are intended to establish more effective controls in the acquisition of armaments.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[3 May 2006]

In reply to your note verbale No. 985/5 dated 10 March 2006 relating to the above subject, the Ministry of National Defence states that the main principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control are:

- Full compliance with United Nations resolutions and respect for the Charter of the United Nations in regard to this matter;
- The need to focus as a priority on the resolution of international disputes, in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict;
- The equality of States in terms of sovereignty and territorial integrity, prevention of the arms race, and confidence-building;
- An undertaking by all concerned regional States to remain compliant with a view to precluding any repetition of the double standards applied in connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the need to hold States accountable in the event of non-compliance;
- Control of the manufacture and transfer of arms and the combating of smuggling and illicit trafficking in arms to ensure that they do not fall into the hands of terrorists;
- The enactment of legislation at the regional and international levels to limit the proliferation of such weapons, while maintaining the possibility of their individual or collective use to resist occupation or defend territory;
- The strengthening of multilateralism as a means of furthering negotiation on arms regulation and disarmament.

Mauritius

[Original: English]
[20 June 2006]

The Republic of Mauritius does not have any armed forces but a paramilitary force which is a component of the Mauritius Police Force responsible for internal security.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[1 May 2006]

In response to the note verbale of 27 February 2006 (DDA/16-2006/CAC), from the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Government of Mexico hereby communicates its views on conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels, in conformity with paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 60/75, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 8 December 2005.

Mexico considers that conventional arms control can make a major contribution to maintaining and strengthening regional and international peace and security.

As a regional and international control and confidence-building measure, Mexico has submitted information relating to its military imports, exports and expenditure to the United Nations every year since 1992.

At the regional level, security mechanisms have been defined to address the threat of terrorism and strengthen security through the establishment of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), at the meeting of the Presidents of the United States and Mexico and the Prime Minister of Canada in Waco, Texas, on 23 March 2005.

The agreements reached are set out in the Security Agenda, which aims to develop a common security strategy in order to secure North America. To this end, it identifies the following priority areas:

- Secure North America from external threats;
- Prevent and respond to threats within North America; and
- Further streamline the secure movement of low-risk traffic across shared borders.

In this context, Mexico will continue to promote the conclusion of agreements on conventional arms control, provided such agreements respect international law, in particular the inherent right of States to self-defence under the terms provided in the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Pakistan

[Original: English]
[4 May 2006]

1. The end of the cold war gave rise to expectations for the realization of a new global security architecture marked by lowering of tensions, efforts for pacific settlement of disputes and the creation of conditions conducive to halting and reversing the trend of massive and competitive accumulation of weapons of all kinds.

2. However, due to continuing regional conflicts and the emergence of new ones, the expectation for such security architecture remains unfulfilled. Destabilizing

arms build-ups and growing military budgets continue to consume enormous human and material resources. (According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the global annual military expenditure figure has crossed US$ 1 trillion and is growing.)

3. Efforts for the pacific settlement of disputes and the conduct of international relations on the basis of peaceful coexistence and trust between States have not kept pace with developments on the economic front which are characterized by increasing interdependence of States.

4. Peace and security and socio-economic development are indivisible. Continuing arms acquisitions impede the freeing up of vital resources for the socio-economic development of the peoples of the world and the realization of the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. They adversely affect social and economic development. Such a situation is not conducive for a genuine and lasting peace.

5. The question of arms control is of the utmost importance and an urgent task facing the international community.

6. It would, however, be important to point out that while the dangerous and destabilizing arms build-up in various regions of the world presents grave threat to regional and global peace and security and exacerbates tensions, it is not the cause but the result of such tensions. The causes of the arms race are of fundamental significance. While arms control measures do supplement and contribute to the peaceful settlement of existing problems and disputes, they cannot in themselves ensure greater security and stable relationships between States.

7. Arms control measures alone cannot substitute for steps for the pacific settlement of disputes. They should be pursued in parallel with earnest efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, which provides for a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements or other peaceful means chosen by the parties concerned. The Secretary-General, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, could also contribute significantly to the pacific settlement of disputes by providing his good offices in promoting peace processes between States.

8. Addressing the underlying causes of conflicts such as hegemony, domination, foreign occupation, economic disparity and racial discrimination will create an environment of trust and security which is essential for the success of arms control and disarmament measures. To ensure an environment of lasting peace, security and stability, the following principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations must, inter alia, be strictly observed:

(a) Peaceful settlement of disputes;

(b) Refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State;

(c) Non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of States;

(d) Sovereign equality of States and self-determination of peoples under foreign occupation.

9. Among genuine measures of arms control, together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, the limitation and gradual reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons should be resolutely pursued. In parallel with measures for arms control at the global level, conventional arms control needs to be pursued in the regional and subregional contexts, since most threats to peace and security in the post-cold-war era arise mainly among States located in the same region or subregion.

10. Consideration of the question of conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels should take into account the following:

- The need of all States to protect their security as well as the inalienable right to self-determination and independence of peoples under colonial or foreign domination
- The adoption of such measures should take place in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security, so that no individual State or group of States should obtain advantage over others at any stage
- Negotiations on the reduction of armed forces and of conventional armaments should have at each stage the objective of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces
- The limitation and reduction of conventional arms and armed forces could relate to weapons and manpower and include their deployment as well as force postures
- States should take into account a number of factors, such as circumstances prevailing in a particular region, the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the forces which are the subject of arms control and disarmament measures, asymmetries that might exist among various countries and the need to eliminate these asymmetries, which are prejudicial to security; the various significant implications of military strategies; and the need to take steps to eliminate the capability of surprise attack and offensive action
- Regional arms control measures should be taken at the initiative and with the participation of States concerned and must take into account the specific characteristics of each region
- States with the largest military arsenals have a special responsibility in pursuing the process of conventional arms reduction and promoting agreements for regional security.

11. Pakistan is pursuing a Composite Dialogue process with India with a view to resolving all outstanding issues in a peaceful manner. The resolution of the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir is the key to a lasting environment of peace and security in South Asia. As a part of the Dialogue, both Pakistan and India are pursuing confidence-building measures in the military, economic, social and cultural fields.

12. The security-related confidence-building measures pertain to both the conventional and the nuclear areas. Such measures proposed by Pakistan in the conventional field have been guided by the considerations and principles outlined above, which derive from the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United

Nations and the work done in this regard by relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

13. Pakistan seeks to maintain strategic stability in South Asia through arms control and restraint proposals based on the universally agreed principles of equal security for all. The objective of these proposals is a stable environment of peace and security and the avoidance of conflict in South Asia.

14. The conventional confidence-building measures agreed to between Pakistan and India since the initiation of the Composite Dialogue process in 2004 include:

- Reaffirmation by both sides of the commitment to uphold the ongoing ceasefire
- Implementation of the 1991 Agreement between Pakistan and India on Prevention of Air Space Violations in letter and spirit
- Upgradation of the hotline between the Directors-General of Military Operations
- No development of new posts and defence works along the Line of Control
- Holding of monthly flag meetings between local commanders at Kargil/Olding, Uri/Chakothi, Naushera/Sadabad and Jammu/Sialkot Sectors
- Speedy return of inadvertent line crossers and the working out of a comprehensive framework to that end
- Periodic review of the existing confidence-building measures.

15. Pakistan has proposed a Strategic Restraint Regime with three-interlocking elements of (a) conflict resolution; (b) nuclear and missile restraint; and (c) conventional balance.

16. Apart from conflict resolution through a sustained and result-oriented dialogue and for nuclear and missile restraint, Pakistan's Strategic Restraint Regime proposal provides for avoidance of a conventional arms race and measures for conventional stability which include the non-acquisition or deployment of destabilizing weapons systems and the adoption of force postures and military doctrines with a non-offensive orientation.

17. Pakistan is committed to continuing the peace process with India, including confidence-building measures in the conventional and nuclear area, with the objective of creating an environment conducive to the resolution of all outstanding disputes and the avoidance of armed conflict. The Lahore Memorandum of Understanding of February 1999 agreed between Pakistan and India provides a framework for the elaboration of wide-ranging measures for conventional and nuclear stability and discussions on security threat perceptions, which should reduce pretexts for unnecessary and destabilizing arms build-up.

18. The Conference on Disarmament should consider the formulation of principles that can serve as a framework for regional arrangements on conventional arms control. Pakistan also supports the convening of a conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, for the prevention of the development and deployment of sophisticated conventional weapons with excessively destructive capabilities and humanitarian and environmental impact.

Serbia and Montenegro

[Original: English]
[4 May 2006]

Although not a signatory to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, Serbia and Montenegro actively participates in conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels through the implementation of the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control, thus making a major contribution to stabilization among the parties through full implementation of the Agreement.

From the military point of view, as a starting point for regional agreements on conventional arms control, the following principles can be used: the exchange of information on conventional arms; elaboration of starting positions regarding the quantity and types of conventional arms; establishment of the verification regime and of the multinational body at subregional and regional levels in order to achieve the goals and implement the provisions of the newly created regional and subregional agreements in conventional arms control.

Since the above principles are already contained in the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control, there are no reasons why they should not be included in all other similar regional agreements relating to conventional forces control.